

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 9548

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, GR
SUBJECT: PAPANDREOU GOES COURTING THE MILITARY

1. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S FLIRTATION WITH THE GREEK MILITARY HAS BECOME A PUBLIC COURTSHIP. WHILE THE PASOK LEADER HAS DIRECTED SOOTHING WORDS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE OFFICERS IN THE PAST, HIS SEPTEMBER 8 SPEECH MARKING THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDATION OF HIS MOVEMENT TWO YEARS AGO WAS AN ESCALATION IN THE BLATANCY WITH WHICH HE DELIVERED HIS BLANDISHMENTS.

2. PAPANDREOU'S SPEECH WAS OF COURSE FILLED WITH HIS STANDARD THEMES. THE DEMAND FOR A DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES AND THE WEST, THE ACCUSATION THAT THE UNITED STATES AND NATO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF GREECE'S PAST AND PRESENT ILLS, AND VAGUE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE "SOCIALISM" PASOK INTENDS TO BRING TO GREECE. BUT IT WAS ITS ATTEMPT TO ROMANCE THE GREEK MILITARY THAT CAUGHT MOST OBSERVERS' EYE.

3. PAPANDREOU APPEALED TO THE MILITARY ON SEVERAL LEVELS. ON ONE HE ADDRESSED OFFICERS WHO MAY BE DISSATISFIED WITH CARAMANLIS' ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE
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AEGEAN DISPUTE. HE SPELLED OUT AT SOME LENGTH HIS VIEW THAT

ATTEMPTS TO APPEASE THE TURKS WHOSE ACTIONS HE SAID ARE STIMULATED BY THE USG AND TOLERATED BY THE SOVIETS, WILL INEVITABLE LEAD TO EITHER UNACCEPTABLE CONCESSIONS TO THEM OR TO WAR. HE REPEATED HIS POSITION THAT ONLY IF THE TURKS MEET FIRM RESISTANCE FROM THE GREEKS WILL GREEK INTERESTS BE PROTECTED AND WAR AVOIDED.

4. IN HIS SPEECH PAPANDREOU ALSO SOUGHT TO TELL THE GREEK MILITARY AS A WHOLE THAT IT WAS BLAMELESS IN THE TRAUMAS OF RECENT GREEK HISTORY-- INCLUDING THE SEVEN YEARS OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIP AND THE CYPRUS DEBACLE. HE ENTIRELY DROPPED HIS PAST CONSTANT DEMAND FOR A COMPLETE PURGE OF "PRO-JUNTA" GREEK OFFICERS. INSTEAD, HE ARGUED THAT THE GREEK MILITARY HAD BEEN REPEATEDLY ABUSED AND MISUSED BY THE UNITED STATES, THE "ALLIANCE", THE PRO-JUNTA LEADERSHIP OF THE ARMED FORCES, THE MONARCHY AND THE GREEK RIGHT. HE ACCUSED THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF SEEKING TO "IMPRESS" ITS POLITICS ON THE GREEK OFFICER CORPS. PAPANDREOU SAID THAT IN FACT GREEK OFFICERS HAVE NOT ONLY A RIGHT TO THEIR OWN OPINIONS BUT TO EXPRESS THEM THROUGH THEIR VOTE AND THROUGH THEIR VOICE "WHEN NOT ON DUTY".

5. COMMENT: THE BENIGN INTERPRETATION OF THE FOREGOING IS THAT PAPANDREOU IS MERELY TRYING TO OVERCOME OPPOSITION TO HIMSELF AND HIS POLITICS AMONG THE GREEK MILITARY, AND THEREBY REMOVE THE OFFICER CORPS AS AN OBSTACLE TO HIS DRIVE FOR FUTURE ACCESSION TO THE LEADERSHIP OF GREECE. CERTAINLY THIS IS PART OF HIS PURPOSE. BUT PAPANDREOU IS NOT BENIGN. AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ANYBODY SO AMBITIOUS IS WILLING TO RESTRICT HIMSELF TO SUCH LIMITED GOALS. MORE LIKELY, HE IS HOPING TO POSITION HIMSELF SO THAT IN TIME OF NATIONAL CRISIS -- AND PARTICULARLY ONE OVER THE AEGEAN -- THE MILITARY, OR ELEMENTS OF IT, WOULD NOT MERELY STAND ASIDE AND PERMIT HIM TO RISE TO POWER BUT, RATHER, WOULD PROPEL HIM IN THAT DIRECTION.

6. WE, OF COURSE, HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH A
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DEVELOPMENT IS IN THE MAKING. HOWEVER, THE QUESTION NOW BECOMES NOT ONLY ONE OF PAPANDREOU'S PURPOSES BUT OF WHO IS LISTENING TO HIS SONG, IN THE MILITARY AND BEYOND.

7. ONE GROUP IS, OF COURSE, THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY. BUT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PAPANDREOU, CARAMANLIS' POLICY OF SEEKING A NEGOTIATED AEGEAN

SETTLEMENT CONTINUES TO HAVE BROAD SUPPORT FROM THE
OPPOSITION. AND THOUGH HE DEALT SCATHINGLY WITH THE
GOG'S POLICIES, PAPANDREOU DID NOT DARE ATTACK
CARAMANLIS PERSONALLY, A MEASURE OF HIS CONTINUED
RESPECT FOR THE WIDE SUPPORT THE PRIME MINISTER ENJOYS
IN THE COUNTRY. AS LONG AS CARAMANLIS CONTINUES TO
HAVE THIS KIND OF POPULAR SUPPORT, PAPANDREOU'S
CHANCES OF PROJECTING HIMSELF AS A PLAUSIBLE
NATIONAL LEADER ARE REMOTE. WE BELIEVE THAT
PAPANDREOU'S ABILITY TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE GREEK
ARMED FORCES IS EQUALLY LIMITED IN PRESENT CIRCUM-
STANCES. HIS PREVIOUS WHOLESAL ATTACK ON THE GREEK
ARMED FORCES AND HIS OWN LESS-THAN-HEROIC RECORD AT
TIMES OF NATIONAL CRISIS ARE WELL-KNOWN BOTH TO
THE GREEK PUBLIC AND TO THE GREEK MILITARY.
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